

VZCZCXRO6652
RR RUEHPA
DE RUEHPA #0265 3491535
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 151535Z DEC 09
FM AMEMBASSY PRAIA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 1896
INFO RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 0651
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON 0277
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0121
RUEILB/NCTC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHMFIUU/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC
RUEFHLC/DEPT OF HOMELAND SECURITY WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEHPA/AMEMBASSY PRAIA 2811

UNCLAS PRAIA 000265

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

DEPT FOR S/CT (SHORE)

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PTER](#) [ASEC](#) [SMIG](#) [CV](#)

SUBJECT: CAPE VERDE: 2009 COUNTRY REPORTS ON TERRORISM

REF: STATE 109980

1. (U) Per reftel, Post submits the following text for submission in the 2009 Country Reports on Terrorism. Embassy POC is Jeffrey E. Zinsmeister, +238 260-8995, email: ZinsmeisterJE@state.gov.

2. (U) Begin text:

Terrorist organizations have not historically operated in Cape Verde due to its geographic isolation in the mid-Atlantic. Nonetheless, a recent influx of West African immigrants, attracted by Cape Verde's relative prosperity and political stability, has raised concerns. Many Muslims in this predominantly Roman Catholic country come from mainland Africa, and mosques in the nation's capital have reportedly been proselytizing aggressively, and have attracted visiting religious workers from West Africa and the Sudan. As of November 2009, however, there were no reports of local mosques spreading radical messages. In addition, individuals holding passports from 14 other member-states of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) -- Benin, Burkina Faso, Cote D'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, and Togo -- may enter Cape Verde for 90 days without a visa, making it relatively easy for them to come and go unnoticed.

Cape Verdean authorities also continued to prosecute a case against Jean-Charles Mendes Da Silva, a French citizen and alleged member of the Algerian terrorist organization Al-Jama'ah al-Islamiyah al-Musallah (aka Armed Islamic Group). In 2000, Da Silva escaped from a French prison where he had been incarcerated for participating in a Paris-area bombing. According to media reports, the French Directorate-General for External Security believes Da Silva contacted terrorist organizations throughout North Africa after his escape and then sought refuge in Cape Verde, where he attempted to establish a terrorist cell. On March 10, 2007, Cape Verdean police arrested Da Silva on an Interpol warrant and on unrelated forgery and weapons charges. A Cape Verdean court convicted him of those crimes, as well as of certain criminal offenses related to his activities in France, but prosecutors declined to seek a conviction under Cape Verde's anti-terrorism laws. Moreover, Cape Verde refused the French government's request to extradite Da Silva, because he had claimed and obtained Cape Verdean citizenship prior to his arrest. (The Cape Verdean constitution forbids extradition of its citizens, and some speculate that Da Silva claimed citizenship when he arrived in Cape Verde specifically to obtain this protection.) He was awaiting sentencing as of November 2009.

With respect to antiterrorism legislation, Cape Verdean law specifically criminalizes terrorist activity, including the provision of material assistance to terrorists. The code of criminal procedure also gives police wider authority to perform wiretaps and warrantless searches in cases of suspected terrorism. Additionally, in November 2009 Cape Verde's two major political parties informally agreed to amend the Cape Verdean constitution in order to allow nighttime searches and seizures in such circumstances.

Cape Verdean law enforcement has taken special measures to prevent terrorists from entering the country. Immigration authorities check names of visitors against a database of actual and suspected terrorists, which includes data furnished by the U.S. government. Cape Verde is in the process of obtaining access to certain data from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Integrated Automated Fingerprint Identification System, and also participates in the ECOWAS Warning and Response Network, an information-sharing program addressing security issues.

End text.

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